

inous droppings fell vertically, thus whitening the nest material, a habit more typical of the Falconidae rather than of the Accipitridae (Brown & Amadon 1968), which generally eject their excreta clear of the nest.

Both adults brought food to the young and during the mid morning period one chick was fed seven times during 105 min, another five times in 60 min and the third seven times in 80 min. All prey items seen delivered to the young were lizards, however, it was not possible from the distance to determine to what family they belonged. Each young bird was thus fed once every 11 to 15 min. The adults hunted within about 2 km of the nest tree, and prey was caught either by a dive from harrier (*Circus*)-like quartering, or by plunging to earth from a hover. Not every attempt was successful.

Two days later (25 October) the adults were seen passing food directly to the young in mid air, while doing so both young and adult tumbled earthwards (R. Campbell and B. Davidson, pers. comm.).

Although the chicks called from time to time in the absence of the adult birds, they became very vocal when the adults were seen, uttering high-pitched 'chirruping' calls and exposing their red gapes. On two occasions, one of the adults uttered a melodious 'chattering' call as it left the nest, but otherwise they were silent.

Some pellets were found beneath the nest, but many of them had been broken up by beetles (Coleoptera: Trogidae) which were feeding on their organic content. Identified remains from the pellets included Orthoptera, Hymenoptera (Formicidae), some Coleoptera, two separate chelicerae of a solifuge (Arachnida: Solifugae) as well as lizard jaw bones and vertebrae. Two of the pellets, which were rough in texture, measured 22 x 13 mm and 23 x 15 mm.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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#### A ROOST OF LESSER KESTRELS *FALCO NAUMANNI* ON THE ATHI PLAINS, KENYA

Smalley (1983) describes a roost of Lesser Kestrels observed in Nairobi National Park during March and April 1983, and states that large assemblies of this species have not been recorded in the area for many years. This roost was not an isolated occurrence, however, as on 9 and 10 April 1983 C.A. Taylor and I observed a large roost of Lesser Kestrels in tall acacia trees in a valley on the Athi Plains near Kajiado at 1.46S, 36.46E. The roost contained at least 2500 Lesser Kestrels and 35 Eastern Red-footed Falcons *Falco amurensis*.

Birds were seen to approach the roost from all directions but the majority came from the west and southwest; they continued to arrive at the roost until darkness fell. The only other Palaearctic falcon seen in the vicinity of the roost was a single Hobby *F. subbuteo* on 9 April.

#### REFERENCE

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Received 7 November 1983

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